



**American
Red Cross**

Connecticut Blood Services Region

**American Red Cross
Statement to the Children Committee
State of Connecticut General Assembly – H.B. No. 6331
February 21, 2013**

***Testimony of Patricia Pisciotto, M.D., Chief Medical Officer,
American Red Cross Blood Services
Northeast Division***

Chairpersons Representative Diana Urban, Senator Dante Bartolomeo and Members of the Children Committee:

My name is Dr. Patricia Pisciotto and I am Chief Medical Officer of the Northeast Division of the American Red Cross Blood Services.

It is a privilege to be here today to encourage the passage of Raised Bill 6331, an act concerning Sixteen-Year-Old Blood Donors.

As background, I am board certified in the specialties of pediatric hematology-oncology, and blood banking/transfusion medicine.

Most of my medical career has been in a hospital setting caring for patients who often needed blood components and I experienced the consequence to patients when components were not immediately available.

The United States experiences a constant need to recruit new blood donors since only a small amount of the population donates blood.

The pool of eligible blood donors is estimated at less than 38% of American adults.

As intended in this raised bill, lowering the donation age in Connecticut could have a significant positive impact on the blood supply, providing the opportunity to allow more than 50,000 young men and women to give the gift of life each year in this state.*

Moreover, we believe enabling 16-year olds to donate blood at high schools is an important opportunity for the Red Cross to educate potential donors on the benefits of a lifetime of committed service to the community through donation.

It gives the average student more than one opportunity to be approached and educated on the importance of blood donation.

While lowering the donation age to 16 years unquestionably increases the availability of lifesaving blood for patients, the Red Cross is committed to assuring that donor safety is not compromised by this measure.

Thirty-eight states, including all of our bordering states, now allow 16 year-olds to donate blood and the American Red Cross experience with these young adults has been very positive.

Most blood donors have a good experience after donating blood.

We monitor reaction rates among all blood donors and recognize that adverse reactions are more common in first time donors and are related to age, weight and gender.

The most common adverse reaction to a blood donation in young donors includes feeling faint.

The American Red Cross has implemented interventions designed to minimize these reactions among young donors which has included:

- Pre-donation education
- Standardized drive set up to control environment
- Encourage hydration before and after donation
- Implement new height and weight criteria

We feel great responsibility to educate all our donors in the blood donation process and want everyone to feel good about being a blood donor.

As you can see from the materials provided to you today we actively reach out to parents and students alike to answer questions about what to expect and how to prepare for a successful blood donation.

The physicians of the American Red Cross Blood Services are confident that passage of Raised Bill 6331 will increase the supply of lifesaving blood for patients in need without unduly compromising the health and well-being of 16-year-old blood donors.

Thank you very much.

I welcome any questions you may have at this time.

*The 2010 Census shows a population of 50,988 for Age 16.